

and Masters degree in Education. She continued her educational pursuits, receiving her Professional Degree in Administration and Supervision from St. John's University, and a PhD in Educational Leadership from Fordham University.

In 2003, Dr. Nimmons began an eight year career as Principal of Granville T. Woods Public School 335, which serves the predominantly African American, Crown Heights and Bedford Stuttesant Brooklyn neighborhoods. In this time Dr. Nimmons increased the passing rates in both mathematics and English courses by 67% and 61% respectively. With the guide of Dr. Nimmons P.S. 335 made the transformation, showing most gains of any other 4th grade students in New York State in mathematics and English. This earned the school the distinction of a National Blue Ribbon Award.

Prior to becoming Principal at Granville T. Woods School, Dr. Nimmons was the director of curriculum and instruction for Community School District Sixteen. In this capacity she directed elementary and middle school Principals and teachers in professional development activities in all curriculum areas. The district that was once one of the lowest performing in the city, now boasts better gains than many other New York City school districts in similar socioeconomic communities.

Dr. Nimmons has been awarded many prestigious awards for her dedicated service: the Terrell Bell Award for Excellence in Leadership, Educator of the Year Award in 2009 and 2011 from Education Update Magazine, and the 2010 Outstanding Educator of the Year from the Association of Black Educators in New York. Dr. Nimmons is currently a member of the Cahn Fellows Program for Distinguished Public School Principals at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Dr. Nimmons' leadership, compassion and knowledge make her an example to all in our community. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the vast achievements of Dr. Laverne Nimmons.

#### THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE FOR THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

**HON. KATHLEEN C. HOCHUL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 8, 2011*

Ms. HOCHUL. Mr. Speaker, even though we are approaching the conclusion of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we still live in a dangerous world. But if we look back over the past two decades we can see that considerable progress has been made.

In 1991 the Soviet Union disintegrated, according to our late, great Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a victim of ethnic tensions among the various and diverse republics that made up the USSR. Two decades later, much change has taken place in the former Soviet Union. Independent democracies have begun to emerge where once there were just brutal dictatorships. The Cold War is now over and we no longer have the same types of demands on our defense infrastructure prevalent of that era.

There is one former Soviet Republic that I would like to single out today and congratulate

on the 20th anniversary of its independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has been a good friend of the United States, co-operating with us on the war on terror and the program to prevent former Soviet nuclear weapons from falling into the wrong hands. Azerbaijan has also provided important logistical support to our forces in Afghanistan and sent over 150 soldiers to assist us in our efforts in that country.

As a secular Shiite Muslim country, Azerbaijan has been a role model. Before Azerbaijan was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1918, after the Russian Revolution, the country enjoyed a brief period of independence, and was the very first Muslim country to grant women the right to vote in 1918, two years before the United States did so with the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

Azerbaijan has also enjoyed strong relations with Israel and the over 12,000 Azeri Jews are treated as full members of that society. Unlike most Muslim countries, Azerbaijan has full diplomatic relations with Israel and has hosted Israeli President Shimon Peres on a state visit in 2009. Israel is also Azerbaijan's 5th largest trading partner, and Azerbaijan provides over one-sixth of Israel's oil supply. As a result of these strong relations, when almost 600 Israeli citizens were stranded in Georgia at the beginning of the Russian invasion of that country and the Tbilisi Airport closed, Azerbaijan sent buses to the Georgian border to help evacuate the Israelis.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to concur with President Obama's statement on October 20, 2011 that "This 20th anniversary of independence, and Azerbaijan's achievements during this time, demonstrate the extraordinary promise and determination of the Azeri people. The United States is committed to developing greater opportunities to work with the Government and people of Azerbaijan."

#### TRIBUTE TO BEN MCKINNON, "GODFATHER OF BIRMINGHAM RADIO"

**HON. JO BONNER**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 8, 2011*

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of Alabama's radio pioneers, Mr. Ben McKinnon, who recently passed away at the age of 89. An influential force in broadcasting throughout the Southeast, Ben was perhaps best known as the "Godfather" of Birmingham radio.

Born in Maxton, North Carolina, Ben graduated from the University of North Carolina with an AB in Journalism. As the nation became involved in the Second World War, Ben answered his country's call to duty by serving as a line officer in the U.S. Navy. Seeing action in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres, Ben led one of the major assault waves on Yellow Beach in Okinawa.

Upon returning home from the war, Ben traded his service pistol for a typewriter as editor of three weekly newspapers in his home county. But it wasn't long before his gaze turned toward the growing broadcast industry. He soon joined the staff of legendary Charlotte radio station WBT as local sales manager. Three years later he was hired as general

manager of television station WGVL in Greenville, SC. His skills as a manager quickly brought him down to Alabama where he took the reins of Birmingham radio station WSGN. From that point on, he would call Alabama's largest city his home.

As vice president and general manager and later president of WSGN, Ben transformed the radio station into a dominant player in Birmingham and north Alabama broadcasting. Under his leadership, WSGN—known as "The Big 610"—thundered across the airwaves with the Magic City's first full-time "top 40" format. For those who listened to radio in the 50s and 60s, rock 'n roll was king. Under Ben's direction, WSGN proudly wore the crown in Birmingham radio and earned a spot as one of the nation's top rock 'n roll stations.

Upon his retirement after 28 years with WSGN, Ben remained a strong voice in the state's communications industry. As executive director of the Alabama Broadcasters Association, he was a frequent visitor to Washington, DC to advocate on behalf of our local radio and television stations. He led the ABA for 18 years before retiring a second time.

Mr. Speaker, Ben's awards and accomplishments are, frankly, too extensive to list here. He was active in numerous major Birmingham area community service organizations for decades, ranging from board member of the Jefferson County March of Dimes and the Birmingham Chapter of the American Red Cross, to president of the Jefferson County Chapter of the American Cancer Society—to name but a few.

His remarkable career and many contributions to society are further highlighted by an impressive array of recognitions including the Thad Holt Distinguished Broadcaster Award from the University of Alabama School of Communications, the Silver Plate Award from the South Carolina Association of Broadcasters, the Broadcaster of the Year Award from the Alabama Broadcasters Association, and the National Association of Broadcasters State Executive of the Year Award.

On behalf of the people of Alabama, I wish to offer condolences to Ben's daughters, Sharon Bruns, Ellen McKinnon and Lisa McKinnon; and grandchildren and many friends. You are each in our thoughts and prayers. Ben was well loved and will be sorely missed.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF THE CAREER AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE HONORABLE NETTIE MAYERSOHN

**HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 8, 2011*

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the exceptional achievements and outstanding career of New York State Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn. Nettie was the political midwife to a generation of young politicians in New York. She spent decades working tirelessly for the people of Queens, and I know I speak for many when I say that her recent retirement from the Assembly has truly marked the end of an era. Nettie is being honored this week for her innumerable accomplishments over many years by the Stevenson Regular Democratic Club at its

annual dinner, and I would like to join in recognizing the profound impact that my very dear and long-time friend, Nettie Mayersohn, has had on our community.

Nettie Mayersohn's steadfast dedication to Queens County began long before she was elected to the Assembly. For over 20 years, she served as a community activist, making a name for herself as an unrelenting advocate for children and families in Queens. She was a member of Community Board 8 for ten years, at one time serving as the Chairperson of its Youth Committee; she served as the Chairperson of the Pomonok Community Center; and she continues to serve as a Democratic District Leader, a role she has filled for some three decades. Nettie also served as the Executive Secretary of the New York State Crime Victims Board. In 1977, Nettie was New York State's delegate to the International Women's Conference and the recipient of the Builders of Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. She received a B.A. from Queens College in 1978, and was elected four years later to represent the 27th District in the New York State Assembly.

As an Assemblywoman, Nettie led the charge to improve healthcare for New Yorkers and defend the rights of victims of violent crime. Nettie's proudest and best-known achievement was the 1996 passage of her Baby AIDS bill, which requires doctors in New York State to tell a mother if her newborn child is HIV-positive. While the fight to enact this bill was, at times, a lonely battle, Nettie's tenacity and fortitude resulted in a landmark law that has saved an untold number of lives and led to an increase in the number of pregnant women who receive prenatal care. Among Nettie's numerous other legislative accomplishments are her HIV Rape Law, which requires a court to comply with a rape victim's request to test the accused for HIV; her Partner Notification Law, which requires the names of those testing positive for HIV to be reported to the Department of Health for the purpose of contact tracing and partner notification; her Victim Impact Law, which allows the victims of a crime to describe, in court, the effect the crime has had on their lives; and her Food Service Law, which implemented crucial health safety measures for food service workers.

Nettie Mayersohn's unwavering commitment to AIDS policy inspired the Beyond AIDS Foundation to create the Nettie Award—an annual honor that recognizes outstanding efforts to promote HIV prevention and control in the United States and across the world. Nettie herself was given a special Nettie Award from Beyond AIDS in 2002, in recognition of her leadership on HIV/AIDS issues. That year, she also received the Public Service Award from the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

After 28 years of tireless service, Nettie retired from the Assembly at the beginning of April 2011 so she can spend time more with her wonderful family. While I lament Nettie's retirement from an impressive career as a public servant, she will remain my lifelong friend. We are all beyond grateful for everything she has done to help New Yorkers. I wish her all the best in her retirement—she will be sorely missed in public life.

Mr. Speaker, Nettie Mayersohn is a one-of-a-kind leader and I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing her accomplishments and

thanking Nettie for a lifetime of dedication to her community.

#### HONORING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EAST ALDINE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

#### HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 8, 2011

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the tenth anniversary of the East Aldine Management District for their commitment to improving the safety and development in East Aldine.

The District was created in June of 2001 with the purpose to improve the physical, social, and economic well-being of the community. Their goal is to attract public and private investments and promote the area as a leading place to not only invest but also to work and live. Since then the District has gained the power to finance public safety and transportation projects as well as assist with environmental and economic development.

District funding has improved the community's street conditions by adding pedestrian crosswalks, signage to the streets and landscaping, making the area more attractive to families and businesses. In the year 2010 alone, the District funded over \$240,000 in community projects.

The District's economic development program provides across the board marketing and public relations activities for the District to support business retention and encourage new business within the District as well as expansion of small businesses. The development program is successful due to the advanced media outreach which includes traditional methods such as print and mailings but also utilizes the District's alliance with community partners.

Over the past ten years this community has witnessed significant advancements but the next ten years will bring even more economic growth to the area. The District is located just four miles away from Houston Intercontinental Airport and the Port of Houston is a mere twelve miles away, making the District a great expansion location for manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution companies.

I congratulate the President and CEO David Hawes, Board Chairman Gerald Overturf, the entire East Aldine District staff, and the many other volunteers that have dedicated their time to improving their community.

#### HONORING RALPH STANFORD GRIFFIN

#### HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 8, 2011

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember and pay tribute to the tremendous contributions made to our community by my friend and constituent, Ralph Stanford Griffin, who passed away on December 1, 2011.

Ralph Griffin, a native of San Antonio, Texas, worked and raised his family in the

San Francisco Bay Area, retiring as an educator and administrator from the Oakland Unified School District. Ralph was a lifelong champion of equal education for all, services for the developmentally disabled, and support for African American families in our community.

His passion and determined advocacy was in no small part the catalyst for establishing the Black Families Association of Contra Costa County (BFA) in 1973. As Founding Members, Mr. Griffin and his wife of 50 years, Norma, together with a small group of their peers saw the need for African Americans in their community to have an outlet to discuss current events and provide support to one another. In an era where racism and biases still prevented equal access to housing and education, the BFA was a place where neighbors could come together to guide and help one another through these challenges. It was and remains an organization that promotes cultural heritage, pride, and dignity within the community, and provides scholarships for deserving high school students.

Ralph Griffin further extended his commitment to students' access to higher education as a dedicated member of the Kennedy-King Memorial Scholarship Fund. He was instrumental in helping the Fund provide annual \$8,000 college scholarships to students from minority groups often under-represented at California's four-year colleges and universities. It is due to Ralph's commitment that so many of our brightest graduating high school students have been able to continue on to higher education.

To Norma, their sons Stanford and Steven, and the entire Griffin family, I extend my heartfelt condolences. Your loss is shared not only by those who knew Ralph personally, but also by all of those touched by his work. I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering Mr. Ralph Griffin, a courageous and compassionate man who shared his time and talent freely for the betterment of our entire community.

#### CONGRATULATING SAN JACINTO COLLEGE ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

#### HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 8, 2011

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate San Jacinto College on its fiftieth anniversary. For fifty years, San Jacinto College has provided high quality education to the citizens and communities of East Harris County, Texas. Congratulations to San Jacinto College for a wonderful half-century of empowering students to achieve their goals.

San Jacinto College first opened its doors on Sept. 18, 1961, in a downtown Pasadena storefront, with an initial enrollment of 700 students. Thanks to their passion for helping students succeed, the college has grown to serve more than 30,000 students in 140 disciplines, and it continues to expand.

A leader in comprehensive learning, San Jacinto College recently earned recognition for being a veteran friendly college and was named an Achieving the Dream Leader College. This establishment plays a critical role in improving the educational experience of the hard working citizens in our communities.